

PPC Update 2020

AN ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL OF HOLY SPIRIT PARISH—ST CLAIR

Dearest Holy Spirit Parishioners.

It has been a joyful, sometimes busy and definitely challenging twelve months for our wonderful Parish.

In **FEBRUARY 2020** we were blessed to welcome two new members to the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), Michael Paulo and Dominic Dimech. This was the month I was honoured to be elected as the Chairperson to cover the remaining one-year term of Margaret Fono, who sadly left the Parish to relocate to Port Macquarie. Sarah Damole continued as Assistant Chair and Bernadette Stevens continued as Secretary and we thank them both for the wonderful job they do. During the year we also said farewell to Margaret Portelli who left due to family commitments and Cathy Allen who completed her full term at the council. We acknowledge the continued help and support of the rest of the council members Jamie Dowsett, Gus Morgan, Paola Dicenso, and our Basic Gift representative Eleanor Stuart.

During this month Janice Stuart presented the Vinnies Report which was very insightful.

VINNIES MINISTRY visit families in St Clair, Erskine Park, Kemps Creek and Colyton experiencing financial hardship. Assisted 80 families in 2019. Most of these families required more than one visit throughout the year. There are people whose circumstances will probably never change and will always require some sort of assistance with electricity, gas, water, food, whitegoods, clothing, furniture and from time to time also provide funeral, rental and car repair assistance.

At Christmas each family receives a Christmas hamper. The items in the hampers are provided by our parishioners, the students and families of Emmaus Catholic College, Erskine Park High School, Holy Spirit Primary School, Trinity Primary School, Community Junction and this year for the first time

we had St Clair High School.

MARCH 2020 was quickly upon us and we invited Frances Garzaniti and Belinda Geelan from Holy Spirit Primary, Rina Hibbs from Trinity Primary and Robert Nastasi from Emmaus Catholic College to discuss ways in which we could strengthen the relationship between the schools and our Parish. We had some wonderful suggestions including:

- Participation from the school children with readings and prayers of the faithful and various other roles during mass
- Opportunities to get parents involved during preparation of Sacraments
- Advertise our different ministries including Altar Servers, Children's Choir and Youth Group, through the school newsletters to get students involved in the masses



2020 Members of the PPC
with our Schools and College leadership teams

As we all know too well COVID struck our shores and almost everything shut down including our monthly PPC meetings which were unfortunately suspended along with the church being closed for the first time in our 40-year history. During this time, we felt anxiety, confusion, and major inconveniences. Our schools were shut and parents not only had to work from home but also had to home school their children. Organised sports and other activities were cancelled and panic buying became a thing!

Needless to say our Easter looked very different and parishioners were forced to stay at home during one of the most important times of our

liturgical calendar. Thanks to Fr Myk and our "Worship at Home" pamphlets, we were able to hold our own liturgies with our families at home and many parishioners tuned in via livestream to watch masses at home, our family homes became our Domestic Church.

PARISH RENOVATIONS - During the quiet time, whilst the Church was closed, we had a great opportunity to complete the Parish renovations. Thanks to Fr Myk and the grants team for attaining a Government Grant worth \$22,000 which went towards renovating the sacristy, storage room and two kitchens. We couldn't have done the renovations without the help of the Men's Business Ministry and especially Geoff Pirotta, James Pirotta, Deacon Rod Pirotta and his wife Katherine, Derrick Slade, Greg Gregoriou and Lindsay Hewerdine, and also the additional donation of the St Mary of Cherso Association.

In **MAY 2020**, just in time for Pentecost, restrictions meant we were able to have only 10 parishioners attend mass. This was a strange time but we were thankful for at least some parishioners were being able to attend our Pentecost mass.

By **JUNE 2020** further restrictions were being eased and we were allowed to have 50 parishioners attend mass. Things were starting looking up, however, the financial situation of our Parish was

looking grim as mass attendance was so low. Thanks be to God for the financial assistance we received from the Government and we were able to receive Jobkeeper payments and the stimulus packages to help with some of the costs. We also started promoting the Tap & Go machines further as a



BEING A MISSIONARY CHURCH



A big thank you to all who helped, in one way or another, in the renovation of our church during the lockdown, and also to the many other grant projects that we have undertaken recently. Our sincerest gratitude to our Federal and State MPs for their support, i.e., Hon. Chris Bowen MP and Hon. Tanya Davies MP.

replacement for cash. Thankfully a new Finance committee was formed just before the lockdown with members including Vasco Gil, Elna Sandot, Lorensz Herft, (who is part of the grants team) and Geoff Pirotta.

This month was our first PPC meeting since the closure of the Church and it's when Zoom became very popular! We no longer had Fr Peter in the room with us, electing to join us virtually. During our meeting and keeping with the COVID theme the PPC reflected on the lockdowns and spoke about what we had learnt, what we valued and what we wanted to keep. Some of the comments shared were:

- Watching livestreaming of the mass is not the same as being physically present in church, receiving communion and being in communion with everybody
- People with younger children, had so much more time together
- Loved it; however, not being able to come to mass was the only negative. Enjoyed working from home as it was great time saving
- Experienced struggle on the one hand and appreciation on the other
- Gave us time for ourselves to think about what matters in life - family, friends, ardent desire and

longing to be with our church community which created a vacuum in all of us

- A positive - healing of nature
- Personal struggles with grieving for loss of loved ones
- More prayer time, improvising exercise. Negatives - lack of physical touch, praying via zoom is not the same; however, we are all in this together

JULY 2020 PPC meeting kicked off with the planning of Fr Tuyen's ordination which was going to be held at Emmaus Catholic College to allow for 250 people to attend. Fr Myk also advised that there was another successful grant application under the Safer Communities Program amounting to just over \$70K for an automated gate in the carpark, solar-powered security lights, 21-channel CCTV inside and outside the building and a security door in the office for the safety of staff. We also reviewed and discussed Policies and Diocesan Guidelines to comply with COVID safety plan and the Parish finances which had been negatively impacted.

This month saw further restrictions being eased and we could now have 175 parishioners attend mass which was truly wonderful and a blessing as more and more people were coming back to Church to celebrate the Eucharist. It wasn't long until restrictions were back! And we once again were limited to 100 parishioners in the church which caused our plans for Fr Tuyen's ordination to be changed (again).

AUGUST 2020 was an amazing month when we witnessed the Ordination of Fr Tuyen which was the very first Priestly Ordination in our parish. Although not everybody could be there in person, we were able to stream the mass live for parishioners and Fr Tuyen's family to view from home. The ordination was such a beautiful mass and we were joined by the Augustinian Clergy including the Prior Provincial Fr Peter Jones, and Bishop Vincent Long.

During our August PPC meeting, Sarah presented the Pastoral Care of the Sick Ministry Report which was very insightful.

PASTORAL CARE/MINISTRY OF COMMUNION OF THE SICK consists of reaching out or supporting or showing concern by the Christian community for its members who are ill and deprived of their rightful and accustomed place in the Eucharistic community. In bringing communion to the sick, the infirm, the frail, aged and the housebound, the ministers represent Christ and manifest faith and charity on behalf of our parish community towards those who cannot be present at the Eucharist.

We also welcomed Augustinian student, John Zhang, to our parish who was assigned to Holy Spirit Parish for training for his ministry.

In **SEPTEMBER 2020**, Elna (*Finance Committee Chairperson*) provided a Finance report to the PPC.

PHOTOS FROM FR TUYEN'S ORDINATION 10am, Saturday, 1 August 2020



THE FINANCE COMMITTEE is a collaboration between parishioners and the Parish Priest in the administration of the temporal goods of the parish.

In **October 2020** we welcomed Germaine Gil, Sacramental Coordinator to our PPC meeting to provide an update on the Sacramental Program.

Sacramental Program looked a little different this year in how the sessions and masses were run due to the Covid restrictions. However, the sacramental preparation still went ahead and we saw 77 children celebrate their Confirmation, 62 Children receive the sacrament of First Reconciliation, and 79 children celebrated their First Holy Communion. As Jesus said "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." - *Matthew 19:14*

By **NOVEMBER 2020** Covid restrictions had eased and we could once again have 175 parishioners attend mass. Fr Myk sadly announced that Fr Tuyen would soon be leaving us to take up a new role at the Augustinian community in Vietnam and after a phone call from the Vietnamese Embassy, Tuyen left our shores on 8th December! We all miss Fr Tuyen's smiling face around the Parish. During this month we welcomed Van Tu Nguyen, OSA to our parish. Tu was

a Vietnamese Augustinian seminarian who had his Pastoral Placement here at Holy Spirit until Christmas.

During our PPC meeting we welcomed Raelene Pirotta, who provided a report on the RCIA Ministry and updated the council on many items:

RCIA Ministry Report

- RCIA Ministry Team: Raelene, Moira, Jenny Kyd, Peter Moriarty, Bro John. Fr Myk will assist with Theology and Rod Pirotta has also offered his help
- RCIA should be a process, not a program
- Gaps found between Baptism and afterwards
- Trying to make it a lifelong process, depending on the candidates with flexible meeting times
- More Gospel focused
- Parishioners will be asked to volunteer to be sponsors for the candidates

DECEMBER 2020 was very quickly upon us and Fr Myk commenced preparations for our Christmas masses. This was not going to be an easy task with the restrictions still in place. It was decided to have four Christmas Eve masses and bookings were essential! We also offered extra Christmas Vigil masses in the Multi-Purpose area of Holy Spirit Primary School.

We also said farewell to Brother Tu who finished his Pastoral Placement with us and went back to Brookvale at the Augustinian Formation House.

Finally, I can't thank Fr Myk enough, for keeping our Parish up and running in spite of all its challenges during COVID. Fr Myk never tires of



helping the Holy Spirit Community, organising and planning and filling out endless forms for all those Government Grants! Please continue to keep Fr Myk and our wonderful Holy Spirit Parish in your prayers.

On behalf of the Parish Pastoral Council I would like to wish you all abundant health and happiness and a much better 2021. We are praying that this year 2021 will see the recommencement of all our activities, gatherings and fiestas so that we may all reunite and come together to celebrate all the big and small occasions at Holy Spirit Parish. As Pope Francis said ***“Let us thank the Lord for every grace received and let us look with confidence and hope to the future, entrusting ourselves to the intercession of St. Joseph, patron saint of the new year. May it be for each of you and for your families a happy year full of divine graces.”***

God bless you all.

✉ Ana Gregoriou

Chairperson - Holy Spirit Parish Pastoral Council



Holy Spirit Parish St Clair • Erskine Park • Parts of Kemps Creek

Under the Pastoral Care of the Augustinians

Diocese of Parramatta

www.parra.catholic.org.au

Facebook

Holy Spirit Parish St Clair-Erskine Park • Holy Spirit Parish St Clair Family Ministry • BASICGIFT (Youth Ministry)

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Parish Council

Chair: Ana Gregoriou • **Asst Chair:** Paola Dicenso • **Secretary:** Bernadette Stevens

Members: Dominic Dimech, Jamie Dowsett, Gus Morgan, Sarah Cañete-Damole, Stephen Middleton Michael Paulo, Vince Cachia, Eleanor Stuart (BASIC GIFT Youth Representative)

Fr Michael Belonio OSA, Fr Peter Tangey OSA, Br John Zhang, OSA